

**Amendments to the Claims:****Listing of Claims:**

1. (Previously presented) A method for the purification of an easily polymerizable substance, comprising the step of using a column provided in at least part thereof with (a) a tray directly fixed with a bolt and a nut to a support ring fitted to the inner wall of the column or (b) a tray fixed to a support ring fitted to the inner wall with a vertical clamp;

wherein at least one liquid passing opening is provided to a joint part between said support ring and the inner wall of said column.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said tray is a dualflow tray.

3. (Canceled).

4. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1 further comprising a liquid passing opening provided to a fixing part between said tray and said support ring and/or, where one tray is formed of a plurality of component plates, a fixing part between each of the component plates and the plate of tray.

5. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said column is a distillation column with a plurality of trays.

6. (Original) A method according to claim 5, wherein said column is a distillation column with 3 to 100 trays.

7. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said easily polymerizable substance is at least one member selected from the group consisting of an unsaturated carboxylic acid, an ester thereof, a vinyl-group containing compound, and a diolefin compound.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 7, wherein said easily polymerizable substance is at least one member selected from the group consisting of an unsaturated carboxylic acid and an ester thereof.

9. (Currently amended) A method for the purification of an easily polymerizable substance, comprising the step of:

performing purification by the use of a distillation column provided in the lower part thereof with a splash collision plate having either an opening area ratio of said splash collision plate in the range of 30% to 70% when a dualflow tray is used as said splash collision plate or a total opening area of said splash collision plate and a segmental opening in the range of 10% to 90% relative to a cross section of the column, when a disc-and-doughnut type collision plate and/or a segment baffle type collision plate is used as said splash collision plate.

10. (Original) A method according to claim 9, wherein said distillation column has a dualflow tray.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 9, wherein said splash collision plate is at least one member selected from the group consisting of a dualflow tray, disc-and-doughnut plate and segmental baffle plate.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 11, wherein said column is a distillation column with 3 to 100 trays.

13. (Original) A method according to claim 9, wherein said easily polymerizable substance is at least one member selected from the group consisting of an unsaturated carboxylic acid, an ester thereof, a vinyl-group containing compound, and a diolefin compound.

14. (Original) A method according to claim 13, wherein said easily polymerizable substance is at least one member selected from the group consisting of an unsaturated carboxylic acid and an ester thereof.

15. (Previously presented) A purification apparatus comprising at least one of the following items (i) - (iii);

(i) a tray fixed to a support ring, fitted to the inner wall of a distillation column, by the use of a vertical clamp,

(ii) at least one liquid passing opening provided in a joint part between said support ring and the wall of said column, and

(iii) a liquid passing opening provided in a fixing part between said tray and said support ring.

16. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 15 further comprising 3 to 100 trays therein.

17. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 15, the column is used for purifying an easily polymerizable substance.

18. (Canceled).

19. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 15 further comprising a liquid passing opening provided to the fixing part between said tray and said support ring and/or, where one tray is formed of a plurality of component plates, the fixing part between each of the component plates and the plate of tray.